

make his mind easy. His "book will sell like hot cakes. . . .

' L'Assommoir' will be a wonderful success."

In a pecuniary sense, such was indeed the case directly M. Charpentier published the book in 1877.¹ Of the ordinary edition fifty thousand copies — a very large figure for those days — were soon sold, and at the end of 1879, eighty thousand had been disposed of; these being independent of a " popular " illustrated edition, issued in fifty-nine " parts " at ten centimes apiece, forty thousand copies of which were disseminated chiefly among the Parisian working classes (whom the story was said to libel) in the course of 1878 alone. From 1877 onward an unexampled controversy raged round the book as well as round Zola's principles and methods generally — a controversy to which additional zest was imparted both by a dramatic adaptation of the story, which drew all Paris to the Theatre de l'Ambigu, and by the publication in French of some of the articles on French literature and literary men which Zola had written for the Russian review. More fuel was added to the fire by a pamphlet he penned and called " La Republique française et la Littérature," and by a series of papers he contributed to " Le Voltaire " and collected a little later under the title of "Le Roman Experimental." Wherever one went in

Paris one heard allusion to or discussion of Zola, "L'Assommoir," and "naturalism." The newspapers were full of articles: the author was attacked by such men as Henri

¹ "L'Assommoir," Paris, Charpentier, 1877, 18mo, 573 pages; one hundred and twenty-seventh thousand on sale in 1893 when the Rougon-Macquart series was completed; one hundred and fifty-first thousand reached in 1903. Illustrated edition: Paris, Marpon and Flammarion, 1878, large 8vo, title, 466 pages, with 62 wood engravings after Gill, Clairin, Leloir, etc. Issued originally in parts (see above), the volume was priced at 6 francs. It has been frequently reprinted.